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ABSTRACT

Numerous attempts have been made to improve the effectiveness of decision-making in organizational settings. Some of the historical and contemporary organizational trends regarding these efforts, both in business and in school settings, are presented in this paper. The focus is on the related expectations and outcomes that are evident in diverse organizational settings. Some of the past trends include management by objectives; job satisfaction; factors in effective organizations, such as job enrichment; and productivity that is linked to human relations. Some of the current trends in decision-making entail the notion of "a community of leaders," increased empowerment for employees, a heightened sense of ownership that engages employees in decisions, the role of school leadership in decision-making, the use of cognitive-coaching and clinical-supervision models, effective communication that increases worker empowerment, parental and business involvement, and site-based management, which is now considered the key in enhancing the ownership and the responsibility of all stakeholders. (Contains approximately 150 references.) (RJM)

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IMPROVING THE "QUALITY OF LIFE" IN SCHOOL AND BUSINESS ORGANIZATIONS: Historical and Contemporary Trends

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Improving the "Quality of Life" in School and Business Organizations: Historical and Contemporary Trends

by

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Introduction

Over the years, there have been attempts to improve not only the effectiveness of decision-making in organizational settings but also the "quality of life" in the workplace. Such endeavors have created opportunities for different outcomes in educational and corporate sectors. In the mid-1970s and early 1980s, for example, the climate in these organizations, the amount of time for participative decision-making that was afforded to subordinates, and related productivity outcomes were touted as some of the areas for scrutiny. They were often viewed as key areas for viable changes, particularly to enhance the employee's morale, job satisfaction, and overall productivity. More recently, site-based management(SBM) and decision-making; more empowerment and ownership in the organization; understanding work cultures; problem-based learning to enhance critical thinking skills on the job; and parental and business involvements have been underscored as the necessary components linked to more effective organizations. Exemplary or innovative worksites are often featured on videos, television programs, and at national and regional conferences.

In the first part of this paper, some of these historical and contemporary organizational trends or changes, both in business and school settings, are presented. A summative format is utilized to

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focus on the related expectations and outcomes in diverse organizational settings. In the second part of the paper, related historical and contemporary references are provided. Both quantitative and qualitative resources are included for referrals regarding specific ideas or findings for the business and administrative sectors.

Historical Trends or Changes in Business and School Sectors

1. Management by Objectives (MBO) appeared in the business literature for decades, particularly with Drucker's work in the 1950s, but seemed to be more prominent in the 1970s with different companies. The basis of such a systems-approach to management included several stages of development. For example, performance objectives, resources, and appraisals with results were often addressed. The supportive activities and methods to attain related goals, especially short-term ones, were helpful when they were set and measured as outputs by both superiors and subordinates. The entire process underscored a rational approach to business management. In essence, MBO became a philosophy and formal, systematic method. One of the primary benefits was for managers and employees to achieve better communication and understandings. The action steps, used foremost in business sectors, were later adapted to varying extents, by institutions of higher education and schools in diverse regions.

Applicable Resources: Sanford, Davis, Druker, Humble, Odiorne, Reddin, Tosi, Carroll, and others.

2. Job satisfaction issues and trends continued in both business and administrative sectors, although the commitment varied, primarily in terms of top management considerations and decisions. Earlier studies on job satisfaction revealed that the degree that employees were permitted to make decisions made a difference. Corporate studies, for example, were tied to the importance of "decentralizing" the superior's power so that each subordinate had more opportunities to offer his or her vantage points. In school systems, for example, willing administrators viewed this decentralization as an opportunity to delegate a few job areas and receive feedback. Their decisions often reaffirmed their basic belief in people: trustworthy, competent, and helpful versus untrustworthy, incompetent, and unhelpful. These basic ideas were connected to McGregor's Theory X and Y in human relations.

Applicable Resources: Hicks, Herzberg, Kahn, McGregor, Athos, Coffey, and others.

3. In the 1980s, studies of businesses identified as "effective organizations" included such factors as: job enrichment as it applied to motivation theory; increasing the autonomy and self-direction of workers; and the importance of remaining aware of the needs of customers. For example, Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory was used along with a general framework on motivation theory. The hygiene factors, like salary and physical working conditions, became important. These findings signaled a change as different perceptions began to alter prior thinking about how business management and business schools should be run. Employees could become catalysts for change in organizations. For

example, who had tried an innovative idea? Was that idea a viable approach? The higher levels of satisfaction and motivation achieved by this employee or group of employees could enhance the productivity of the company as well. In diverse schools, the job enrichment components began to appear. Effective leaders in schools, both elementary and secondary, became more aware of the extrinsic and intrinsic motivators for school personnel.

Applicable Resources: Maslow, Sirota, Wolfson, Herzberg, Kahn, and others.

4. Productivity became linked to human relations, as model companies or schools were featured. From a manager's viewpoint, there was a concerted effort to practice and attain a goal of a more productive organization by using human relations skills. When decision-making and communications flowed vertically between superiors and subordinates, there was a bottom line: their dialogic communication endeavors represented a sincere interest in one another. The communiques also became a two-way process of listening as well as speaking and understanding. Thus, there was more flexibility with regard to admitting and accepting failures as learning experiences. The exchanges were considered a "means-ends" process to link the goals of employee satisfaction with the organizational effectiveness, both in companies and schools.

Applicable Resources: Davis, Makay, Gaw, Burke, Fessler, Conley, Schmidle, Schedd, Brown, Keller, Sergiovanni, Starratt, and others.

Current Trends in Business and School Sectors

1. Many people in organizations contend that if there is to be a "community of leaders" in any school or business, then the

employees must have opportunities not only to take responsibility but also become an integral part of the results. Thus, the primary aim should be for effective decisions, based on sharing ideas related to the organizational philosophy, mission and goals; transition stages to achieve those goals; assessing the outcomes; and planning future directions. The leadership style in such organizations is often referred to as visionary or innovative.

Applicable Resources: Conley, Bacharach, Conway, Covey, Deming, Goodlad, Harmon, and others.

2. The degree of "empowerment" for the employees in any business or school organizational setting becomes connected to their beliefs that change(s) can and do occur, and that they are genuinely involved in understanding and deciding what change(s) is most effective. The employees in such organizations also possess a willingness, an "intrinsic" desire to become part of a team in their work environment.

Applicable Resources: Belasco, Block, David, Flanigan, Richardson, Gallagher, Mueller, and others.

3. In school, agency, and corporate experiences, the degree of "ownership" increases as employees are able to engage in decision-making and witness relevant outcomes. Their so-called "voice" in the decision-making process not only counts but also contributes to the increased probability for successful, ongoing transitions with related changes. In current business practices, for example, work teams are being created in different companies, underscoring that the responsibility rests with the team. Their decisions, their productivity levels, and the quality of related outcomes rests with

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such a team-approach. In model schools, school-business partnerships as well as higher education and school teams (e.g. professional centers, charter schools, others) are contributing to these "ownership" responsibilities. Community and parental involvements vary in these settings, but also play a significant role in the positive outcomes.

Applicable Resources: Evans, Duffy, Macher, Marks, Sirota, Wolfson, Licata, Tedlie, Greenfield, and others.

4. In the schools, for example, findings in the late 1980s and 1990s indicated that the degree to which shared decision-making was encouraged and how it was divided often rested in the hands of principals. Much of the reported successes were linked to shared decision-making, but also to the degree of the principal's readiness to share that power. The research on school leadership has revealed that a part of a school administrator's responsibilities included "fostering a culture" or school climate which permitted experimentation and enhanced collegiality among members. In businesses, the "work culture" was interrelated with the effectiveness of outcomes. Child care facilities, leaves for one or both parents, varied work schedules, and technology from home-base networking contributed to the effectiveness concept.

Applicable Resources: Anderson, Synder, Hunter, Murphy, Lois, Sashkin, Walberg, Oliva, Powers, and others.

5. In schools, cognitive coaching and clinical supervision models were espoused as new models. Staff development sessions were used to enhance the opportunities for active participation and ongoing training endeavors among colleagues. Pre-conferencing,

discussing a mental map or plan with a coach, reflective questions to probe the thought processes, and adjustments for better outcomes became an integral part of such sessions. There was an anticipation that if teachers were more aware of how they reflected and actually thought about their own thinking (metacognition) and decisions, then the opportunities would increase for a similar cognitive process for their students. In businesses, human resource development (HRD) training or similar, contracted trainers focused on exploring creativity, reflections, humor, and other factors in the workplace that enhanced outcomes.

Applicable Resources: Eye, Flander, Netzler, Andrews, Smith, Bailey, Talab, Acheson, Gall, Cogan, Krajewski, and others.

6. In agencies, schools, and businesses, effective communication became popularized, as increased worker empowerment and decision-making by employees became the focal point. There was more support for open dialogues or even "forcing devices" to require employees to think about new ways to accomplish goals and outcomes. Rich, informal communication styles were acceptable in concert with more experiments and learning.

Applicable Resources: McGregor, Senge, Okeafor, Peters, Austin, Waterman, and others.

7. Parental and business involvement have been encouraged by personnel in school districts. These endeavors have been done to create and enhance effective learning and social-emotional developments in school organizations. In turn, students have often become interns at these companies during summer sessions, breaks, and the like. Other students have remained on-site as employees.

Both parents and business personnel have been involved in special mentoring, after-school programs, grant proposals, and funding. Their participation has been helpful and valued.

Applicable Resources: Mullen, Meadows, O'Hanlon, Schlick, Senge, Verespe, Iverson, Walberg, Heiserman, Coulombe, Fruchter, Galletta, White, and others.

8. Site-based Management (SBM) and decision-making have remained a key focus of personnel in schools to enhance ownership and responsibilities, as the control and decisions shift from central administration to individual schools. Communication lines must be opened to promote autonomy, self-reflection, the encouragement of new ideas, and other factors. Although SBM is being used to varying degrees, results from surveys show more accountability at local sites; more teacher empowerment; and more autonomy, especially with the educational programs and personnel decisions. In essence, genuine reform(s) of the system becomes a reality. State legislatures and school boards remain responsible, yet their need to dominate is lessened. In businesses, SBM often translates to team projects and decision-making, related personnel evaluation and development, and similar factors. Like schools, personnel in corporations change or initiate reforms when the specific management and style(s) of leadership alter to accommodate for innovations and power shifts. The decentralization in both schools and companies still remains variable. Yet future needs in a global society, along with technological changes, seemingly demand more team focus.

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Applicable Resources: Cistone, Harrison, Killion, Mitchell, Hoyle, James, Raywid, Wylie, Hill, Bonan, Poulin, Gaul, Underwood, Fortune, David, Gleason, Donohue, Lender, McPhee, and others.

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